

SPOTLIGHT

presented by **RECORDING**

Hello! All of us at *Recording Magazine* are pleased to present the first issue of SPOTLIGHT. Featuring one reader's outstanding song submission each month, SPOTLIGHT will delve into the gear and recording techniques used by the artist. SPOTLIGHT will give you the opportunity to read (and hear) how fellow recording musicians made a good song sound great.

We hope you enjoy SPOTLIGHT. Here's to making great recordings!

"Rum Is A Many Blended Thing" / The Coconut Boat Band

Listen to song

Equipment: Dual G4 Mac running MOTU Digital Performer 2.9 with MOTU 2408 interface; Alesis ADAT (connected digitally); Mackie 1604 VLZ mixer; Focusrite TrakMaster Pro; Mics: AKG D112 (kick), Electro-Voice 757 (snare), Oktava MK-012 (overheads), Oktava MK-319 (toms), Nady TCM 1050 (vocals); Gibson flat-top acoustic guitar, Fender Precision bass, Gretsch drums, Roland XP-30 keyboard, Selmer trumpet.

Music: "Rum Is A Many Blended Thing" is a male vocal, light rock song with a decidedly Caribbean vibe, the title track of the Coconut Boat Band's self-released CD, available on CD Baby at <http://cdbaby.com/cd/coconutboatband>. Scott Kirkpatrick co-wrote the tune and also played drums, keyboards, trumpet, and handled all of the vocals. Scott's brother Chuck Kirkpatrick played the guitars and bass, and Scott Ellis co-wrote and played the steel drums.

Recording: The brothers Kirkpatrick and their compadre Mr. Ellis have turned in a superlative effort. These guys are all veteran performers and recordists, with some mighty fine credentials (Chuck engineered "Layla"!), and it shows. Before any of you cry "Foul!" out there, however, take a good look at the gear list. Not a big time, high dollar studio in sight, folks. In fact, it was brother Scott, not Chuck, who handled the recording and mixing here, and a fine job he did indeed!

We hear a beautifully balanced mix, complete with feathery acoustic guitars, an awesome, round tone on the "stride" bass part, and drums that are perfect in timbre and ambience for this kind of track. Add in some mellow, but articulate, steel drums and trumpet, and the whole mix takes on a beach vibe so strong that you'll be checking for sand in your toes.

Oh, and did we mention the vocals? Scott K. pays homage to Buffett, Beach Boys and Byrds in a one man tour de force. Sweet! The subtle use of compression and processing are also impressive. While we can definitely detect a compressor on the vocals, it stops short of sibilance.

When this track was selected for SPOTLIGHT, I decided to contact Scott and get an a few more details on how he managed to achieve such a great vocal sound on the track. It seems that the signal path that Scott followed was straightforward enough: Nady mic into the Focusrite TrakMaster rackmount channel strip (with minimal compression), from there into the MOTU 2408 and then on to the Mac. Nothing fancy here.

No, strangely enough, Scott attributes the success of his vocals to something rather more architectural! It seems that his home studio is situated in a room directly under his young daughter's bedroom. Like many of our loyal readers, Scott would work on his recordings in the evening after his daughter had gone to bed. Because of this, Scott explained that he was forced to sing at a very low volume and really crowd the mic as to not wake his sleeping daughter. Given this information, the lack of artifacts such as lip noise or plosives on his tracks makes his vocals even more impressive.

Finally, using a tried and true "old school" approach, Scott double-tracked each of his parts and then hard panned them left and right during his final mix. At the end of the day, Scott achieved excellent results by adjusting his work habits to fit his environment, something that all of us home recordists can relate to and learn from. Bravo!

Hats off to The Coconut Boat Band, these guys have taken a lifetimes worth of experience and delivered a radio-ready project that is long on sun and fun! Listen to song



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